

Community Voice

COVID-Free Marshall Islands Work To Blunt Hawaii's Curve

The many Marshallese who call Hawaii home will continue to promote policies to keep all of us healthy and safe.

By [Isabela Silk](#)

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The Republic of the Marshall Islands remains one of only 11 nations in the world to have zero confirmed cases of COVID-19.



Much like Hawaii, the RMI's oceanic isolation, for which our atolls are so well known, made it possible to control the flow of inbound passengers and by doing so stopped the spread of the novel coronavirus to our shores.

As a result, not a single case of the coronavirus in Hawaii or the United States was the result of travel to the RMI or transmitted by an inbound traveler coming from the RMI.

Hawaii holds a special place in the hearts of RMI citizens, for whom the Aloha State is a second home to the thousands of Marshallese living and working across all four of the state's counties, for our student scholars attending local universities, and for whom Hawaii is the portal between the RMI and all eastbound ports of call.

Courtesy

Marshallese community members volunteering at a health and wellness community drive and COVID-19 testing site this summer.

But perhaps most important is the deep reverence that indigenous people of the RMI, or as we say "Rimajol," have for the language, the culture, and the traditions of Native Hawaiians.

We share a millenia-old connection to the sea, the land, and the air that is an innate part of our communication and interpersonal sensibility. This native intelligence binds us and is the foundation of our mutual respect for each other and for the islands we steward.

'Wholly Committed'

In the wake of this global pandemic, the Consulate of the Marshall Islands and Marshallese community members and organizations throughout Hawaii went above and beyond the call to support county, state, and federal efforts aimed at flattening the state's COVID-19 curve.

We took early action to translate and disseminate information about the novel coronavirus and CDC guidelines on social distancing protocols. We organized and participated in community drives, and ran educational campaigns on social media.

And we participated in and led outreach efforts in the community in partnership with Waipahu Safe Haven, the Marshallese Community Organization of Hawaii, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, and dozens of other organizations to distribute food, masks, and home school supplies.

All of these efforts come in addition to the RMI's regular contributions to communities across the state of Hawaii. Some of these regular engagements include outreach on behalf of the U.S. Census engagement for Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and hard to reach communities, and our consulate's investment in local non-profits, schools, and community events.

From Lihue to Kau, our Marshallese population in Hawaii is committed to sharing iakwe — our aloha — with our family, friends, and the communities we share.



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As Governor Ige and his administration work to develop standards that will allow for more travel to Hawaii, President Kabua and the members of the Nitijela — the RMI Parliament — remain wholly committed to implementing comprehensive travel measures designed to keep the RMI free of COVID-19.

Our Foreign Ministry is communicating with Hawaii's congressional delegation and numerous U.S. agencies on our plans, and once these robust entry protocols are implemented, we are confident that travel between the RMI and Hawaii can safely resume.

Until that time, the RMI government and the many Marshallese who call Hawaii home will continue to do our part to promote the policies that are in place to keep all of us healthy and safe.

Community Voices aims to encourage broad discussion on many topics of community interest. It's kind of a cross between Letters to the Editor and op-eds. This is your space to talk about important issues or interesting people who are making a difference in our world. Column lengths should be no more than 800 words and we need a photo of the author and a bio. We welcome video commentary and other multimedia formats. Send to news@civilbeat.org. The opinions and information expressed in Community Voices are solely those of the authors and not Civil Beat.

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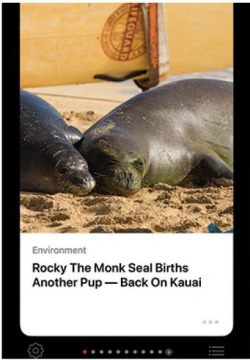
About the Author

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Isabela Silk is the Marshall Islands' Consul General in Hawaii. She is a former Foreign Service officer and previously served as the director in the Office of Compact Implementation in Majuro, where she covered all matters related to the Compact of Free Association with the United States. Silk has a bachelor's degree in political science and administration of justice from the University of Hawaii Hilo.





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